

# New information on the distribution and status of birds in Uruguay

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**SUMMARY.**—Novel distributional data for 19 bird species in Uruguay are provided, including four new for the country: Sharp-billed Treehunter *Heliobletus contaminatus*, Planalto Woodcreeper *Dendrocolaptes platyrostris*, Large-tailed Antshrike *Mackenziaena leachii* and Yellow-olive Flycatcher *Tolmomyias sulphurescens*. The first evidence for the presence of Buff-fronted Owl *Aegolius harrisii* for almost 50 years was also obtained. The status of several other species restricted to forests along the middle Uruguay River is clarified. New data are discussed with reference to available information from neighbouring countries.

Uruguay lies in the Pampas biome of south-eastern South America and >400 species are known from the country. Here we provide novel data for 19 bird species, including four reported for the first time. For most others treated here, there are very few published detailed (i.e., locality and date data) records for Uruguay. Some species were previously included in lists of Uruguayan birds but lack details and / or documentation (Arballo & Cravino 1999, Azpiroz 2001). We also confirm the breeding status of two little-known summer migrants. In many cases, especially for species for which field identification based on morphological characters is difficult, we provide details of available evidence (e.g., specimens, recordings, photographs). Additionally, sound-recordings are available at xeno-canto ([www.xeno-canto.org](http://www.xeno-canto.org); XC). New records are contextualised with respect to data from neighbouring Argentina and Brazil. Observers are specified in each case (Abente = JSA; Azpiroz = ABA; Calimares = CC; Jaramillo = AJ; Menéndez = JLM; Presa = DP; Saralegui = AR) and localities are shown in Fig. 1.

## Species accounts

### **BLACK-COLLARED HAWK** *Busarellus nigricollis*

On 24–25 October 2011 an immature was at Estancia Santo Domingo, dpto. Paysandú (ABA & E. Méndez; Fig. 2). Only four previous reports for Uruguay: Arroyo Laureles, dpto. Rivera, April 1962; isla Arrospide Grande, dpto. Tacuarembó, April 1963; near Paso del Puerto, río Negro, dpto. Río Negro, March 1964 (Gerzenstein 1965); and San Diego, río Yaguarón, dpto. Cerro Largo, October 1988 (Arballo & Cravino 1999). Found in northern and north-east Argentina (Narosky & Yzurieta 2010) with a few records from Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil (Belton 1984, Bencke *et al.* 2003, Accordi & Barcellos 2006). Ours is the first documented record for Uruguay.

### **WILLET** *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*

One photographed at La Estacada, southern dpto. Montevideo, on 30 November 2008 (A. Mello) and another at José Ignacio, south-west dpto. Maldonado, on 27–28 December 2008 (ABA; Fig. 3). Previous reports concern singles photographed at Playa Penino, south-west dpto. San José in March 1987 (Gambarotta *et al.* 1987) and Punta Carretas, dpto. Montevideo in October 2009 (Gil 2011). There are few published records for Argentina (Chebez 2009)



Figure 1. Localities mentioned in the text. ARTIGAS: 1. Rincón de Franquía (30°11'33"S, 57°38'25"W); 2. Bella Unión (30°15'41"S, 57°35'58"W); 3. La Palma (30°16'24.47"S, 57°21'35.0"W); 4. Isla del Zapallo (30°30'16"S, 57°52'47"W); 5. Rincón de Sepulturas (30°49'31.8"S, 56°01'48"W). RIVERA: 6. FYMSA (31°04'38"S, 55°45'17"W); 7. Bañado de Ataques (31°06'05"S, 55°41'21"W); 8. Valle del Lunarejo (31°08'40.38"S, 55°54'03.42"W). TACUAREMBÓ: 9. Sierra del Infiernillo (c.31°24'46"S, 56°08'03"W); 10. Paso Ceferino (31°31'15"S, 56°04'41"W); 11. Valle Edén (31°49'17"S, 56°10'29"W). PAYSANDÚ: 12. Estancia Santo Domingo (31°49'19"S, 57°39'20"W). CERRO LARGO: 13. Cañada del Burro (32°01'34.6"S, 53°57'39.3"W); 14. Paso Centurión (32°07'56"S, 53°43'58"W); 15. Paso Paiva (32°09'21"S, 53°43'04"W). TREINTA Y TRES: 16. Quebrada de los Cuervos Protected Area (32°55'15"S, 54°27'23"W). 17. Arroyo de las Pavas (c.33°11'51"S, 54°47'35"W). LAVALLEJA: 18. Paso Averías (c.33°36'44"S, 54°19'48"W), Cebollatí River. 19. Cerro Arequita (34°17'26"S, 55°15'58"W). MALDONADO: 20. José Ignacio (34°50'45.80"S, 54°37'58.60"W). MONTEVIDEO: 21. La Estacada (34°55'28"S, 56°09'03"W). COLONIA: 22. Arroyo Limetas, Conchillas (34°09'54"S, 58°05'51"W).

and southern Brazil (Belton 1984). One in Buenos Aires province was assigned to *C. s. semipalmatus* on the basis of alternate plumage (Roesler *et al.* 2004). The bird in December 2008 showed some characters of *C. semipalmatus inornatus* (O'Brien 2006), but could not be certainly identified to subspecies.



Figure 2. Black-collared Hawk *Busarellus nigricollis*, Estancia Santo Domingo, dpto. Paysandú Uruguay, 24 October 2011 (Adrián B. Azpiroz)

Figure 3. Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*, José Ignacio, dpto. Maldonado, Uruguay, 27 December 2008 (Adrián B. Azpiroz)

Figure 4. Buff-fronted Owl *Aegolius harrisi*, Gajo Medio del Arroyo Tres Cruces, near Paso Ceferino, dpto. Tacuarembó, Uruguay, 30 November 2010 (Adrián B. Azpiroz)

Figure 5. Sharp-billed Treehunter *Heliobletus contaminatus*, río Yaguarón, Paso Paiva, dpto. Cerro Largo, Uruguay, 21 December 2008 (Adrián B. Azpiroz)

Figure 6. Planalto Woodcreeper *Dendrocolaptes platyrostris*, río Yaguarón, Paso Paiva, dpto. Cerro Largo, Uruguay, 15 June 2011 (Adrián B. Azpiroz)

Figure 7. Large-tailed Antshrike *Mackenziaena leachii*, Paso Centurion, dpto. Cerro Largo, Uruguay, 7 March 2011 (Dardo Presa)

Figure 8. Yellow-olive Flycatcher *Tolmomyias sulphurescens*, río Yaguarón, Paso Centurión, dpto. Cerro Largo, Uruguay, 19 November 2011 (Adrián B. Azpiroz)

Figure 9. Female Crested Becard *Pachyramphus validus*, Paso Paiva, dpto. Cerro Largo, Uruguay, 7 March 2011 (José S. Abente)

Figure 10. Golden-rumped Euphonia *Euphonia cyanocephala*, Bella Unión, dpto. Artigas, Uruguay, 9 June 2009 (© Fernando Lapitz)



### LONG-TUFTED SCREECH OWL *Megascops sanctaecatarinae*

Several identified by voice at three sites within FYMSA (c.31°04'38"S, 55°45'17"W; 31°03'16"S, 55°45'52"W; 31°04'04"S, 55°44'40"W), northern dpto. Rivera, as follows: 30

January 2004 (one), 22 April (two), 6 September (one), 25 November 2007 (one) and 14 December 2008 (one) (AR). Also singles responded to playback at Valle Edén on 29 April 2010 (photographed; CC & A. Olmos) and 8 November 2011 (photographed; ABA). On 30 April 2010 several were heard and a rufous morph responded to playback at Sierra del Infiernillo, northern dpto. Tacuarembó (CC & A. Olmos). Two rufous morphs were seen and sound-recorded (XC67460) at Valle del Lunarejo, 3.5 km north-west of La Palma (31°08'40.38"S, 55°54'03.42"W), north-west dpto. Rivera, on 12 October 2009 (AJ). Individuals responded to playback near Gajo Medio del Arroyo Tres Cruces, c.11 km north-west of Paso Ceferino, northern dpto. Tacuarembó, on 30 November (one), 8 March 2011 (three, photographed and sound-recorded; XC93329) (ABA & N. Martínez Curci) and 1 November 2011 (two, sound-recorded) (ABA & E. Méndez). Finally, a rufous morph was photographed at Rincón de Sepulturas, c.28 km north of Masoller, south-west dpto. Artigas, on 28 March 2011 (A. Olmos). There are a few old reports for Uruguay. Cuello (1975) mentioned three specimens taken in dptos. Artigas, Cerro Largo and Tacuarembó in 1969–71. In Rio Grande do Sul it is scarce near the Uruguayan border (Belton 1984) and in Argentina it is also relatively rare (Chebez 2009).

#### **FERRUGINOUS PYGMY OWL** *Glauclidium brasilianum*

Two photographed at Arroyo de las Pavas, c.38 km west of Treinta y Tres City, dpto. Treinta y Tres, on 2 March 2007 (A. Rocchi & G. Mondón). One photographed and another heard at Quebrada de los Cuervos, dpto. Treinta y Tres, on 3 March 2009 (CC); the species was also observed there in 1999 (CC). Found near Paso Paiva, río Yaguarón, eastern dpto. Cerro Largo on 15 (one) and 16 (two) January 2011; one bird was sound-recorded (ABA, JLM; XC93401). Also photographed at three sites south of Paso Centurión on 6–7 March (DP, JLM, JSA), 9 March (ABA) and 1 November 2011 (JLM, JSA, D. Gil). Singles and pairs were seen repeatedly and photographed at Paso Averías, río Cebollatí, southern dpto. Treinta y Tres, on 18–24 April 2011 (AR & M. Abreu). There are very few previous reports for Uruguay. Wetmore (1926) collected a female near Lascano, dpto. Rocha in February 1921, while Tremoleras (1927) took two at Arroyo Grande, dpto. Flores in 1891 and reported another in dpto. Lavalleja taken prior to 1927, and one was collected at Paso de las Piedras, río Negro, dpto. Durazno, in April 1961 (Cuello & Gerzenstein 1962), but ours are the first records since then. Probably not as rare as previously considered (especially around Centurión) and the species appears to be widespread over the country. It is scarce in Entre Ríos, Argentina (de la Peña 1997) and rare in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil (Belton 1984).

#### **BUFF-FRONTED OWL** *Aegolius harrisii*

One photographed and sound-recorded near Gajo Medio del Arroyo Tres Cruces, c.10 km north-west of Paso Ceferino, northern dpto. Tacuarembó, on 30 November was heard again on 1 December 2010 (ABA & N. Martínez Curci; Fig. 4). Another was photographed and sound-recorded there on 31 October and 1 November 2011 (ABA & E. Méndez). There is only one previous documented record in Uruguay: a female trapped in a mist-net at Estancia Maljos [=Mailhos], Sierra del Infiernillo, Arroyo Tres Cruces, 40 km north of Tacuarembó, in February 1963 (Barlow & Cuello 1964, Gerzenstein 1965, Cuello 1975). All Uruguayan records are from the same general area, very probably <10 km apart. The new records are presumed to represent *A. h. iheringi*, which might be specifically distinct, and is otherwise known from eastern Bolivia, Paraguay, central and eastern Brazil, and north-east Argentina (Marks *et al.* 1999). There are few recent reports from Rio Grande do Sul and north-east Argentina (Bencke *et al.* 2003, Chebez 2009).

**BAND-WINGED NIGHTJAR** *Caprimulgus longirostris*

Of two specimens collected by members of the Sociedad Guazubirá at Arroyo Limetas, north-west of Conchillas, western dpto. Colonia, on 14 August 1966 and 4 May 1968, one is lost and the other is at MNHM (no. 3957). There are very few published records in Uruguay and none is documented. Vaz-Ferreira & Gerzenstein (1961) mentioned two observations in dptos. San José and Colonia, and Gore & Gepp (1978) reported one in Mariscal, dpto. Lavalleja in September 1967 and another in dpto. Maldonado in 1970. Given the dates of these observations, it is possible that the taxon involved is *C. l. patagonicus*, a winter migrant from Patagonia. Specimens from Rio Grande do Sul, however, belong to *C. l. longirostris* (Straube 1990; G. N. Maurício *in litt.* 2011).

**WHITE-BROWED WOODPECKER** *Piculus aurulentus*

One heard in gallery forest along the río Yaguarón (on both the Uruguayan and Brazilian banks), south of Paso Centurión, on 31 October 2011 (JLM, JSA, S. Álvarez, D. Gil). Just one previous record in Uruguay: one seen in October 2006 c.300 m south of the new site (Azpiroz & Menéndez 2008).

**SHARP-BILLED TREEHUNTER** *Heliobletus contaminatus*

Two seen in gallery forest along the río Yaguarón 1.8 km north-west of Paso Paiva on 28 February 2006 (JLM, DP, JSA & S. Álvarez). At the same site, up to four were photographed and sound-recorded on 21 December 2008 (ABA, DP; Fig. 5), 15 February 2010 (JLM; XC93405) and 17 January 2011 (JLM). On 7 March 2011 the species was found a few hundred metres to the south (JLM, JSA). These are the first records in Uruguay and the southernmost ever. It has been found at Vila Basílio in southern Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, c.70 km north-east of Paso Paiva (Maurício & Dias 2001). Previously known from south-east Brazil, eastern Paraguay and north-east Argentina (Remsen 2003).

**PLANALTO WOODCREEPER** *Dendrocolaptes platyrostris*

The voice of one was sound-recorded (XC93402) in gallery forest along the río Yaguarón at Paso Paiva on 21 December 2008 (ABA), but went unrecognised for c.2 years. A pair was photographed and sound-recorded (XC93403) in the same area as *Heliobletus contaminatus* on 29 September–1 October 2010 (DP, ABA, JLM, N. Martínez Curci & L. Doño). In the same place two were photographed and sound-recorded (XC93404) on 15 and 17–18 January 2011 (ABA, JLM; Fig. 6). Again heard around Paso Paiva on 7 March 2011 (JLM) and singles and pairs heard, seen or photographed on 5–6 March (JLM), 29–30 October and 2 November (JLM, S. Álvarez, D. Gil) and 19–20 November 2011 (ABA), 1.4 km south-east of Paso Centurión. Known from eastern and south-eastern Brazil, south-east Paraguay and north-east Argentina (Marantz *et al.* 2003), ours are the first records for Uruguay. Paso Paiva is c.90 km south-west of the previously reported southernmost localities in southern Rio Grande do Sul (Rio Piratini and Passo da Orqueta; Maurício & Dias 1998, 2001).

**LARGE-TAILED ANTSHRIKE** *Mackenziaena leachii*

A female was photographed and sound-recorded in gallery forest at a lagoon 0.7 km south of Paso Centurión on 7–8 March 2011 (JLM, JSA, DP; Fig. 7). A second record was obtained at Cañada del Burro, 16.5 km south-east of Isidoro Noblía, north-eastern dpto. Cerro Largo, where at least one female was photographed on 28–29 August 2011 (M. Abreu & A. Olmos). The two sites are c.25 km apart. These are the first reports for Uruguay and extend the species' known range c.180 km south-west. It was previously known as far south

as Paredão, Rio Camaquã, Rio Grande do Sul, but was expected to occur further south (Maurício & Dias 2001).

#### **GREENISH ELAENIA** *Myiopagis viridicata*

This and the next three species were identified primarily by their voices. One in gallery forest of the río Cuareim at Estancia La Palma, northern dpto. Artigas, on 8 November 2011, was sound-recorded (DP; XC93330) and identified subsequently (JLM). The recording matches the third example of this species on López-Lanús (2008). Previously known from one locality in northern dpto. Rivera where it has been observed regularly in spring and summer since 2004 (Saralegui 2008; AR & CC pers. obs.), the new site lies c.180 km to the north-west. Otherwise known in neighbouring areas from northern Rio Grande do Sul and north-east Argentina (Belton 1985, Narosky & Yzurieta 2010).

#### **OLIVACEOUS ELAENIA** *Elaenia mesoleuca*

Singles sound-recorded and photographed near Gruta de Piria (c.31°03'16"S, 55°45'50"W), FYMSA, Sierra de la Aurora, c.25 km south-west of Rivera, northern dpto. Rivera, as follows: 27 October and 24 November 2005, 22 and 23 December 2009 (the latter mist-netted) (AR). At Gruta de Piria at least five seen and heard (two photographed) on 8 October 2010 (ABA, AR, CC). Three observations at Cerro Arequita, dpto. Lavalleja: one photographed and sound-recorded (XC16330) on 1 December 2007, one heard and another at a nest with two eggs on 8 and 21 November 2008 (photographed and sound-recorded), and heard in December 2010 (A. Ricetto *in litt.* 2011). Seen in gallery forest along Gajo Medio del Arroyo Tres Cruces and in nearby forest patches, c.11 km north-west of Paso Ceferino, on 1 December 2010 (two, sound-recorded; XC93328), 9 March 2011 (ABA & N. Martínez Curci) and 1 November 2011 (ABA & E. Méndez). Found c.1.5 km south of Paso Centurión on 31 October (sound-recorded and photographed; JLM, JSA, DP, S. Álvarez, D. Gil, A. Chlefe & E. Azpiroz), 2 November (sound-recorded; XC93406, c.500 m to the south; JLM, JSA, S. Álvarez & A. Chlefe) and 19–20 November 2011 (two photographed; ABA). Previously known from four localities in Uruguay (Claramunt & Rocha 2001, Azpiroz & Menéndez 2008), we add three new sites (including the southernmost ever, in dpto. Lavalleja), substantially extend the known dates of occurrence (early October–early March) and provide the first breeding record. A summer resident in neighbouring regions, the species is scarce in north-east Argentina (Narosky & Yzurieta 2010) and abundant, mostly in eastern Rio Grande do Sul (Belton 1985).

#### **LARGE ELAENIA** *Elaenia spectabilis*

Singles in the environs of Bella Unión, north-west dpto. Artigas on 1 and 21 April 2007 (JLM & F. Lapitz, respectively), 23 February 2008 (JLM) and 27 February 2009 (JLM, ABA, DP), and at Rincón de Franquía, north of Bella Unión, on 12 October 2009 (JLM) and 30 October 2010 (JLM). Sound-recordings were obtained (XC93399, 93434, 93437). One was also photographed at a nest at Paraje Coronado, 3 km south of Bella Unión, on 7 December 2009 (F. Lapitz *in litt.* 2011). There is only one previous documented report in Uruguay; specimens taken c.7 and 38 km south and south-west of Bella Unión in January and February 1998, respectively (Claramunt & González 1999). Our data suggest this species is a fairly common summer resident in extreme north-west Uruguay and confirm breeding there. Scarce in north-east Argentina (Narosky & Yzurieta 2010) and uncommon to common in western Rio Grande do Sul (Belton 1985).

**YELLOW-BELLIED ELAENIA** *Elaenia flavogaster*

Two seen and sound-recorded close to a wetland (31°10'58.32"S, 55°53'30.12"W) near the arroyo Lunarejo, Valle del Lunarejo, north-west dpto. Rivera, on 9–10 December 2009 (AJ). The only previous report for Uruguay is that of Abreu *et al.* (2010) who found the species at Lago Merín, south-east dpto. Cerro Largo, c.300 km from our localities, in November 2008 and September 2009. A scarce resident in northern Argentina (Narosky & Yzurieta 2010) but regularly observed year-round in Rio Grande do Sul (Belton 1985).

**YELLOW-OLIVE FLYCATCHER** *Tolmomyias sulphurescens*

One was sound-recorded in gallery forest along the río Yaguarón, c.1.5 km south of Paso Centurión, eastern dpto. Cerro Largo, on 7 March 2011 (JLM; XC93439). On 1 November 2011 two were photographed and sound-recorded (XC93408) in the same area (32°08'50"S, 53°43'57"W; JLM, JSA, DP & S. Álvarez). On 19–20 November 2011, one was photographed c.700 m away (32°08'35"S, 53°43'33"W) on the río Yaguarón (ABA; Fig. 8). Known from neighbouring Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil (Maurício & Dias 1998, 2001), ours are the first records for Uruguay and the southernmost ever.

**BOAT-BILLED FLYCATCHER** *Megarhynchus pitangua*

Two at Isla del Zapallo, western dpto. Artigas, on 28 February 2008 (ABA, JLM, DP & F. Lapitz). Three were filmed in gallery forest beside the río Cuareim at Estancia La Palma, northern dpto. Artigas, on 8 November 2011 (DP). The only previous report for Uruguay is that of Abente (2010) who observed a pair at the río Cuareim, northern dpto. Artigas, on 2–3 December 2008. In the south of its range the species is regular in northern and central Rio Grande do Sul (Belton 1985), and north-east Argentina, south to northern Corrientes (Narosky & Yzurieta 2010). Two recent records in northern Buenos Aires, eastern Argentina, perhaps involved vagrants (Merlo & Aleman 2010).

**CRESTED BECARD** *Pachyramphus validus*

A female was photographed c.2 km north-west of Paso Paiva on 7 March 2011 (JSA, JLM; Fig. 9). The species was included in a list of Uruguayan birds by Arballo & Cravino (1999), but without details. Based on unpublished information from the same authors, Claramunt & Cuello (2004) included dpto. Cerro Largo within the species' range. Ours is the first documented record for Uruguay. It is a scarce summer resident in north-east Argentina (Narosky & Yzurieta 2010) and uncommon in Rio Grande do Sul (Belton 1985).

**WEDGE-TAILED GRASS FINCH** *Emberizoides herbicola*

Several records in northern dpto. Rivera: at Bañado de Ataques on 1 September (two) and 7 December 2005 (three); near Gruta de Piria, FYMSA, on 23 December 2009 (two) and 29 January 2010 (three), respectively (AR); at two sites in the Valle del Lunarejo, on 26 September 2008 (three, sound-recorded), 12 October 2009 (two, sound-recorded) and 7–10 December 2010 (one, photographed and sound-recorded, AJ). *E. herbicola* is readily separated from Lesser Grass Finch *E. ypiranganus* on vocal and plumage differences (Tobias *et al.* 1997). Chebataroff & Gerzenstein (1965) reported that a female was collected at Sierra de Mahoma, dpto. San José, but its whereabouts are unknown, and the record possibly involved an immature Great Pampa Finch *Embernagra platensis*. Moderately common resident in grasslands of Rio Grande do Sul, but not recorded near the Uruguayan border (Belton 1985), and scarce in eastern Argentina (Narosky & Yzurieta 2010).

**GOLDEN-RUMPED EUPHONIA** *Euphonia cyanocephala*

A male and two females filmed at Bella Unión on 22 July 2009 (DP). The species was observed repeatedly in the same area in May 2009 and males were photographed on 9 June 2009 (Fig. 10) and 28 July 2010 (F. Lapitz *in litt.* 2011). Included by several authors (e.g., Tremoleras 1920, Baratini 1945, Arballo & Cravino 1999, Azpiroz 2001) for Uruguay, but none provided details. Scarce in northern Argentina, south to northern Entre Ríos (Narosky & Yzurieta 2010), and uncommon in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil (Belton 1985).

**Concluding remarks**

The majority of species reported here are associated with the Atlantic Forest of south-eastern South America. In recent years many such elements have been found in Uruguay in gallery forest along the río Uruguay (around Bella Unión), and along the Cuchilla de Haedo (Lunarejo Valley and environs) and Cuchilla Grande (Centurión and Sierra de Ríos). The latter two areas are relatively low hills that connect areas of similar topography in southern Brazil. North of Bella Unión a small reserve has been established recently (Rincón de Franquía) and habitat restoration is underway. The Lunarejo Valley has been recently incorporated in the National System of Protected Areas (SNAP) as a 'Protected Landscape' and this measure should contribute to its future preservation. However, the Centurión area, which harbours a large number of Atlantic Forest elements (Azpiroz & Menéndez 2008) has not benefited from such initiatives. Although its addition to the SNAP has been proposed, no concrete measures have been implemented to date. Although none of the species mentioned here are of global conservation concern, several probably are threatened at a national level, especially Buff-fronted Owl, because the Uruguayan population is probably small and perhaps isolated.

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